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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 25 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 17 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/328)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 17 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/328)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/328, which contains a letter dated 17 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Shearer and Ambassador Gorgui Ciss, Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal, on behalf of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Shearer.

Mr. Shearer: I thank the Council for the opportunity to brief it today and would like to touch on updates from the ground as well as the progress and challenges we can expect going forward.

I have been Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan for three months and during that time have travelled to all 10 of the Mission's main field offices. I have quickly learned that Juba is not South Sudan. Each of the field offices of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faces its own unique array of different ethnic, political and humanitarian challenges. And in each, UNMISS field personnel experience some of the most difficult circumstances and living conditions that I have seen in my many years of work in conflict zones around the world. For example, a convoy delivering humanitarian supplies from Juba to Bentiu, in the North, a distance of about 1,000 kilometres, or 600 miles, takes more than two weeks. That is owing not only to the appalling roads, but also to the fact that as many as 90 official and, mostly, unofficial checkpoints have to be negotiated along the way.

UNMISS is currently providing direct protection to more than 220,000 civilians in six different locations around the country. The largest site, which is in Bentiu and hosting 125,000 people, is the second-largest urban area in South Sudan, and I have no doubt that thousands of civilians would not be alive today if it were not for UNMISS. Now more than ever, the 12,000 United Nations Blue Helmets and 2,000 United Nations police officers are vital to the protection of civilians.

Since last year, the security, economic and humanitarian situations have worsened markedly. Just in the past few days, the currency dramatically devalued, leaving the Government struggling to meet its financial obligations. As the frustrations mount, so does the risk of instability. Virtually no part of the country is immune to conflict, and yet there has been no concerted effort by any party to adhere to a ceasefire. Instead, over the past month we have actually been seeing the conflict intensify. In some of the violence, the Government forces have responded to attacks by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Opposition and other armed groups, notably in Wau and the Equatorias, in the South. In other areas, in contrast, SPLA operations such as those in Upper Nile and Jonglei appear far more strategic, and are focused on taking opposition-held areas. In early April, the killing of SPLA soldiers by opposition forces triggered retaliatory attacks by Government forces in and around the town of Wau. Multiple witnesses have reported to UNMISS that the SPLA shot many victims after asking them what ethnic group they belonged to. More than 15,000 civilians have sought refuge in the protection sites alongside the UNMISS base, and another 5,000 have fled to the Catholic Church areas in Wau. At UNMISS, we have reinforced our protection capabilities with additional troops and stepped up the amount of patrolling that we are doing.

In the Equatorias, in the South, opposition attacks have focused on vehicles along major supply routes. Following an ambush by suspected opposition forces on the Government near Pajok in Eastern Equatoria, the Government forces, very regrettably, responded by torching houses, looting shops, hospitals and schools and, almost invariably, committing acts of sexual

violence. Once again, boys and men were targeted along ethnic lines. Since the beginning of the year, 60,000 civilians have fled in fear each month from the Equatorias to Uganda. Most of them, unfortunately, are farmers, so that what was once the country's breadbasket is being depopulated, and when these people leave the area, they are no longer involved in the production of food. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that South Sudan is losing about 1,000 metric tonnes of locally produced food as a result. A group of religious leaders I met with recently in Torit, a town in the South, told me that around three-quarters of its population had already fled to Uganda.

As I said, in addition to those more retaliatory operations, there are also significant military operations being conducted that are aimed at gaining a tactical advantage over opposition positions before the onset of the rainy season. Government offensives are currently going on in Upper Nile, towards the town of Longa, and as we speak, an SPLA military force is moving into the area of Kodok, north of Malakal, on the west bank of the Nile, signalling an offensive into an area that we believe could displace as many as 70,000 civilians. And in a third offensive, we are seeing SPLA moves into Nuer areas of Waat that are under opposition control. In the face of this escalation of the past few months, UNMISS has increased the robustness of its protection activities. Our integrated patrols to most of the conflict areas have increased. They are aimed at deterring violence, monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation and engaging with political parties at the local level.

Unfortunately, roadblocks and the denial of flight-safety assurances have restricted the Mission's ability to reach key locations as quickly as we would like. However, I am proud to say that the troop-contributing countries are standing their ground. In recent days, a Rwandan patrol to Pajok in Eastern Equatoria slept at the checkpoint, refusing to back down when SPLA soldiers demanded that it return to base, and was able to get through the following day. In Upper Nile, Mongolian peacekeepers cocked their weapons at SPLA in Opposition soldiers who were abducting young boys for recruitment and secured their release. Chinese peacekeepers braved fire to help humanitarian workers to safety in Kajo Keji, in the Equatorias, and Ethiopian soldiers reacted swiftly in order to apprehend armed men who were trying to penetrate our protection-of-civilian sites in Juba.

Our formed police units are patrolling both inside and outside the protection sites, thereby freeing up our military forces to conduct further long-range patrols. I was heartened by Major General Cammaert's comments in his recent report on the progress that has been made with regard to our troop movements, and we will be pushing further on his follow-up recommendations. The deployment of a regional protection force will again also free up resources to project our presence beyond Juba. However, we should remain realistic in our expectations. An additional 4,000 troops will certainly boost our capacity but will largely have to function under similar rules of engagement.

The humanitarian consequences of the violence have been disastrous. One third of South Sudan's population are currently either displaced or refugees. This is a man-made disaster, unlike that of the other countries in the region experiencing famine brought on by drought. People have been forced to flee their homes and, as the people I have met in places such as Leer have told me, they have exhausted their coping mechanisms. For many, three years of conflict have eroded their basic livelihoods, prevented them from planting and harvesting and caused cattle to be looted on a grand scale.

I want to single out the courage and efforts of humanitarian workers, who, despite massive logistical hurdles, have operated to provide lifesaving support to the most isolated communities. In the past month, there have been three attacks on aid workers alone, killing 10 people. Non-governmental organizations in Mayendit county were forced to evacuate, and humanitarian compounds and supplies have been repeatedly looted, most recently by opposition forces, in Waat and Yuai. Agencies still struggle to gain clearances to access the most vulnerable.

Despite what appears to be attempts by the parties to achieve victory by military means, a political solution is the only way forward for South Sudan. Military offensives are fracturing groups and intensifying ethnic divisions to a degree that will hinder reconciliation. Regrettably, no party has shown interest in reviving the peace agreement. President Kiir's announcement of a national dialogue has been welcomed, but skepticism remains. An independent convener is essential, as is the need to bring in all constituencies, including those

outside the country. Unlike this time last year, when the conflict was construed on a bipolar basis, today the opposition has splintered. Our peacebuilding efforts, by necessity, will need to be more widely cast than in the past.

To create political will, the parties need to be speaking with one voice. The African Union, the Security Council and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) must be united in dealing with the parties. I work hand in hand with the United Nations Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, as well as with the African Union and its Envoy, President Konaré, and IGAD Chair President Mogae to identify ways to revitalize the peace process.

Let me underscore that the political process in South Sudan is not dead; however, it requires significant resuscitation. UNMISS will work together with our partners on opportunities to forge viable solutions to bring an end to the hostilities and the suffering of the people of South Sudan. To do so will require the support of the Council, speaking with a united voice against the current state of affairs.

I end by saying that I am heartened by what I have encountered within UNMISS. It is truly making a difference on the ground. I stand proud to be associated with the Mission and all that it has achieved.

The President: I thank Mr. Shearer for his briefing. We appreciate his sacrifice and leadership on this matter.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ciss.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak to the Security Council on behalf of Ambassador Fodé Seck, Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. He is unfortunately unable to attend this meeting due to a last-minute conflict of schedules. He offers his apologies.

In my statement, I shall summarize the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts (S/2017/326), introduced to the Committee on 16 March, as well as the outcome of the consideration of these conclusions and recommendations by the members of the Committee on 29 March. I shall also briefly touch on the work carried out by the Committee since the Chair's briefing to the Council on 17 November 2016 (see S/PV.7814).

With regard to the political situation, the Panel again asssessed that the Agreement on the Settlement of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan August 2015 had de facto been shattered. In its view, the political arrangement between President Salva Kiir and First Vice-President Taban Deng Gai left the significant segment to one part of the opposition movements, other political camps and many influential non-Dinka community leaders. The Panel concluded that the political arrangement arrangement was

> "not nationally unifying, ha[d] not arrested the security and humanitarian crisis and [was increasingly an obstacle to genuine political reconciliation, undermining the transition to the inclusive and sustainable peace envisaged in resolutions 2206 (2015) and 2290 (2016)" (*S/2017/326, p. 2*).

On the question of security, the Panel noted that the conflict in South Sudan was becoming increasingly asymmetrical, and that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in Government, the SPLM/A in Opposition and other armed groups had all conducted military operations in 2016 and the first quarter of 2017. Nevertheless, it was considered that the military exercises carried out and planned by the SPLM/A in Government, under the leadership of President Kiir, had been the largest by far.

Throughout its mandate, the Panel of Experts identified widespread violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties. It indicates in its final report that such violations had continued unabated, including attacks against civilians, violations of the rights to freedom of expression and opinion, and violations of the rights of the child. Those violations have been committed in a climate of near-total impunity and in the absence of any credible effort to prevent or punish the perpetrators.

The Panel also considered the events that led to the declaration of famine in two counties of Unitty state in February 2017. Specifically, it found that in the years prior to the famine, the Government had conducted repeated military operations in the southern part of the state that had hampered humanitarian assistance and led to forced population displacements.

At the humanitarian level, the Panel reported that at least 100,000 South Sudanese were starving to death and that a million more were on the brink of starvation. In this context, the Panel found that South Sudan was

the world's deadliest country for humanitarian workers. Since the beginning of the war in December 2013, it has recorded the deaths of at least 72 humanitarian workers and reported to the Committee at the meeting on 29 March that the figure had risen to 80. Violent attacks on humanitarian workers were only one of the factors hampering the delivery of aid. Other factors included the intimidation, harassment and detention of humanitarian personnel; the looting of humanitarian supplies; restrictions on the freedom of movement; and a general climate of insecurity.

In accordance with its mandate, the Panel reported cases of the sale, supply or transfer of arms and related equipment and reported regional efforts to halt the deterioration of the situation and the macroeconomic conditions in South Sudan.

The Group of Experts makes four recommendations in its final report. It recommends that the Security Council impose an arms embargo on South Sudan. It also recommends that the Council should send a letter to the President of the Human Rights Council and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights requesting that the Commission receive the full legal and forensic support necessary to execute effectively its mandate to collect, preserve and analyse evidence of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. Since these two recommendations are addressed to the Security Council, the Committee has taken no decision in their respect.

With regard to the other two recommendations of the Panel of Experts, the Committee decided to take note of the recommendation that it consider listing other individuals and entities on the list. Finally, in accordance with the last recommendation, the Committee decided to consider the possibility that Ambassador Seck, in his capacity as Chair, write to the States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to reiterate their obligation to enforce the travel ban and asset freeze established under resolution 2206 (2015) and extended under resolution 2290 (2016). Draft letters were circulated to the members of the Committee under a tacit approval procedure which expires on that date.

I would also like to brief Council members on the work done by the Committee since the Chair addressed them on 17 November 2016. The Chair had the opportunity to visit South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Sudan from 10 to 19 December 2016. He was accompanied by representatives of France and the United Kingdom who sit on the Committee, and members of the Panel of Experts. On that occasion, the Chair was privileged to hear directly from many stakeholders on the ground, as they expressed differing opinions about the situation in South Sudan. He was also able to see the extent to which sanctions have been enforced in the country and region. When he returned from his visit, he circulated a detailed report to his colleagues on the Committee for their consideration during consultations on 18 January.

On 21 March, the Committee held consultations at which the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, made presentations. Ms. Zerrougui noted, among other things, that security conditions in South Sudan had continued to deteriorate, thereby exacerbating a situation that leads to the perpetration of gross violations against children, including in particular, the recruitment and tremendous exploitation of children; the targeting of civilians, including children on the basis of their ethnicity, involving murder, abduction, illegal detention, rape, sexual violence; the torching of villages; looting and the denial of access to humanitarian assistance. Famine has also exacerbated the situation. It is estimated that more than 1 million children suffer from acute malnutrition and that there are in excess of 250,000 cases of severe malnutrition. Ms. Zerrougui underscored that the perpetrators of serious violations against children must be held to account for their actions. If that is not done, it will given them the green light to commit other barbaric acts.

Ms. Bangura, along with Ms. Zerrougui, stated that after three years of conflict, the situation in South Sudan remained just as disastrous and impunity just as pervasive. She underscored that rape, gang rape and other acts of sexual violence continued to be committed in an environment of impunity. She pointed out that the Committee had an important role to play, such as punishing the perpetrators of sexual violence by genuinely adopting targeted measures against those in high-ranking positions. There must be consequences for committing acts of sexual violence or giving orders for such acts to be committed; if not, such crimes will persist.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ciss for his briefing.

I now give the floor to members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to start by complimenting Mr. Shearer and the entire United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) team for the steps that they have taken to enhance the Mission's ability to fulfil its mandate, despite the hostile circumstances in which it operates.

The situation in South Sudan is dire, but I want to recall what we, the members of the Security Council, agreed to on 23 March in presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4. We called for an immediate ceasefire by all parties. We called for steps to be taken to allow life-saving assistance to get to those in need. We called for the immediate removal of obstacles to UNMISS and the deployment of the Regional Protection Force. We also gave our support to joint United Nations, African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) efforts to bring the parties back to the peace agreement. We said that we would to those benchmarks and reassess; so let us do that.

The lack of progress since that presidential statement a month ago is deafening. Fighting and violence in South Sudan have never been so widespread. Events that unfolded in Wau earlier this month are a distressing indication of the apathy of the parties to the conflict towards achieving peace by political means. United Nations reports detail clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the opposition, which resulted in the SPLA seeking violent retribution against civilians in a community they believed to be in support of the opposition.

It is always difficult to deliver aid in a highly insecure environment like South Sudan. But, let us be clear, it is not only the presence of conflict that impedes the ability of humanitarian workers to address the ever-worsening food situation; it is the way in which the conflict is conducted, namely, the fact that it contravenes international humanitarian law. International humanitarian law was breached with the murder of three World Food Programme (WFP) employees in Wau. That was by no means an isolated incident. As Ambassador Ciss noted in his briefing, the murder of those WFP employees adds to the toll of 80 humanitarians who have been killed in South Sudan since December 2013. That must stop. What is also unacceptable is the news that the Government of South Sudan has detained without charge a WFP employee. We call on the Government of South Sudan for his immediate and unconditional release, and urge others to join that call.

The violence in Wau is also an example of the unacceptable and chronic obstructions placed upon UNMISS by the Government of South Sudan. Despite repeated attempts, UNMISS has been prevented from patrolling in Wau and is thus unable to protect civilians. A continued lack of Government cooperation has also prevented meaningful progress on the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

The Council has heard time and again of the shocking impact that this conflict is having on the world's youngest nation. One example is the fact that at least one in every four South Sudanese has now been forced from his or her home since the outbreak of the conflict in December 2013 — what a damning statistic. Despite multiple statements made in the Council and the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD to bring the parties together, we have collectively failed to bring about an end to the conflict. We are further from the IGAD peace agreement than ever.

Yes, we have all pledged to do more. Yes, the Government of South Sudan has time and again promised peace, but the people of South Sudan are fed up with pledges and promises. They need action. We therefore strongly encourage the AU, IGAD and the United Nations to build on their commitment to working together by developing a clear joint plan of action to solve the ongoing crisis in South Sudan without delay.

In conclusion, the question we each need to ask ourselves as we walk out of the Chamber is: How much further are we prepared to let the situation deteriorate on our watch? My answer is — no further at all. With that in mind, I call on regional countries to avert the suffering in their backyards. I remind fellow Council colleagues that it is incumbent on us to use every available tool to pull South Sudan back from the abyss. Dialogue is needed, but so is pressure. An arms embargo would prevent further devastation and re-arming when the rainy season inevitably slows the fighting. Targeted sanctions would remind those in power that a return to peace is the right alternative to the rape and killing of civilians.

We hear month after month the same lack of commitment to peace on the part of all parties. We owe

it to the people of South Sudan to end the horror and secure lasting peace.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Special Representative David Shearer for his briefing and for the good work he has been doing since assuming his new post a few months ago. We also thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal for his briefing on the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

We remain extremely concerned about the worsening security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan. All reports indicate that what is happening in the country is indeed deeply disturbing, and, with every passing day, the situation seems to get worse. Fighting has continued unabated across several parts of the country with devastating consequences for the civilian population. The high level of insecurity coupled with the drought situation in the country has left many South Sudanese food insecure. The dire humanitarian situation requires urgent attention, and, before it is too late, all necessary measures must be taken to save lives and forestall the famine. In that connection, ensuring safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors is absolutely critical to reach those in need of life-saving assistance, and it is incumbent upon all the parties on the ground to facilitate that without any preconditions.

The cessation of all hostilities and violence in the country is imperative not only for facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, but also for creating the conditions necessary for the holding of genuine and inclusive dialogue so as to achieve lasting peace and reconciliation in South Sudan. It is important that the Government honour its commitments to its unilateral ceasefire, and all other parties should also be urged to immediately stop fighting. The 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan remains an important framework to end the conflict in South Sudan, and we believe that it is through the full implementation of the Agreement, greater inclusivity, forgiveness and reconciliation that peace and stability can be restored in the country. That is what necessitates the need for reinvigorating the peace process and, in that regard, we continue to believe that the national dialogue initiative announced by the Government has the real potential to facilitate that objective if it is conducted in an all-inclusive manner.

We cannot overemphasize the need for unity of purpose among the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and the United Nations in the search for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan. In that connection, the joint press statement of 29 January continues to represent a useful framework for cooperation among those three organizations in their joint efforts to reinvigorate the South Sudanese peace process. Its implementation remains the key to addressing the South Sudan issue. Of course, we fully understand the growing frustration within the international community because of the prevailing situation on the ground and the lack of any meaningful progress. However, there is no option for the three organizations other than redoubling their efforts to reverse the current alarming trajectory.

In that regard, we would like to stress one very critical point that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Shearer mentioned earlier. At no time has the alignment of voices and actions of the region, the AU, the United Nations, the Security Council and the international community in general been as critical as it is today. A one-voice message is what could make a difference in South Sudan.

The countries of the region are being inundated with thousands of refugees fleeing South Sudan because of the rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian situation. Therefore, they have a stake in resolving the South Sudanese conflict and can indeed play an important role in the search for a lasting solution to it. Recently, there has been progress in adopting a common regional approach to deal with the South Sudanese issue. That was demonstrated during the thirtieth extraordinary summit of IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government on South Sudan in Nairobi, and the communiqué issued at the conclusion of the summit is a testament to positive developments in the region. That is why the assertion in the final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) (S/2017/326) — that the region is fractured in its response to the conflict in South Sudan — does not, in our opinion, accurately reflect the reality on the ground. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that there have been deficiencies. The need to do more remains so as to consolidate the unity of the region. I would like to indicate that every possible effort is being exerted in that direction.

We also know full well that no matter what we in the region and the rest of the international community do, nothing can be achieved without the willingness and readiness of the South Sudanese parties to stop

the fighting and find a lasting solution through reconciliation and dialogue. That is why the Council needs to continue to urge them to do so in order to end the suffering of the South Sudanese people.

Finally, with regard to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, we are working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to expedite the deployment of an advance infantry company, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/328). We welcome the limited progress made in the deployment preparation but also note the challenges that still need to be addressed. We hope that the United Nations and the Government of South Sudan will reach a common understanding in addressing those issues and pave the way for the full and speedy deployment of the Force.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal for their briefings.

The Security Council has been meeting intensively since July 2016 to discuss the situation in South Sudan following the armed clashes in the capital of Juba between Government and opposition forces, which triggered a cycle of violence in the country. Despite the difference of opinion between the members of the Security Council on how to address the crisis, there has always been and remains a general consensus and true unanimity within the Council with regard to the importance of reviving a political settlement of the crisis as a pillar for achieving peace and stability and for ending the suffering, human rights violations, displacement and looming famine faced by civilians in South Sudan.

Despite the efforts of the regional parties and the international entities mandated with following up on and reviving the political solution, nothing has yet crystallized into a practical and inclusive initiative ensuring that the parties will completely cease hostilities and revive their commitment to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. In that context, we emphasize the importance of coordinating the international and regional efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council, the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Chair of the AU Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, so as to develop a comprehensive political initiative for a solution. That may require us to focus our efforts on persuading the Government and opposition leaders to end hostilities for a preliminary three-month period so as to allow for national dialogue and provide it with momentum.

We are convinced that further delay to opening the political horizon and ceasing the hostilities will further complicate and aggravate the crisis. We therefore fear that the Security Council's meetings on South Sudan might become routine gatherings at which principled positions concerning the conflict are repeated without any real ability to influence the situation on the ground. We also fear that such debates may become removed from the conflict and the reality on the ground. In that context, let us be mindful of the information contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) (S/2017/326) pertaining to the collapse of the Peace Agreement. We note that such a superficial reading of the political situation could unfortunately give a green light to the parties on both sides to continue fighting without any legal or political framework.

We have continued to call in the Council for a focus on a political solution, and we also believe that there is an urgent need and moral and legal obligation for the parties to the conflict to end all forms of violence, commit to and respect the principles of international law, uphold their responsibilities with regard to civilians, and ensure the security and safety of humanitarian workers. We therefore believe that continued obstruction of humanitarian efforts will lead only to further suffering and increase the human cost of the conflict. It will also undermine the regional efforts under way to achieve a political settlement and to end the suffering of civilians.

In this context, we also emphasize the importance of continuing to work with the Government of South Sudan to facilitate access to the affected areas quickly, safely and in a manner free of obstacles. This is necessary for UNMISS to carry out its mandate as adopted by the Council. In this respect, we wish to express our surprise at the continued delay in deploying the regional protection force. It is important that we arrive at a common understanding between the Secretariat and the Government on the details of the force's mandate, its terms of reference and its location. We stress also the importance of ensuring the necessary capacity and training for the force before its deployment so that it

can effectively discharge its mandate. We must also create conditions conducive to ensuring its security.

It is the Council's responsibility to not only prevent the collapse of the State in South Sudan but also to support it in future. The Council is well aware, on the basis of its experience with other conflicts, that the vacuum that results from the collapse of a State can be filled only by chaos, the price of which is paid primarily by civilians — women, men and children. It is the Council's responsibility to work to elevate the substantive discussion on the crisis in South Sudan so that it can identify priorities in terms of actions to be taken, and to use the best tools available to it to support such actions and ensure their success. For this reason, we must work on improving the content of the reports received by the Council from the Secretariat, as well as periodically engage in dialogue with the various South Sudanese and regional parties.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, I wish to thank you for having convened this important meeting on the issue of South Sudan. I should also like to thank in particular Special Representative of the Secretary-General David Shearer for his briefing and for his leadership of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) since taking up his functions in January. I also welcome the briefing by the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, and I congratulate Senegal for its resolute action at the helm of the Committee.

One month ago, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/4) listing the actions expected of the South Sudanese parties by the end of April in order to stabilize the situation. However, as the briefers have underscored, it is clear that these demands have not been complied with. Hostilities have not ceased, far from it; the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic; there has been weak implementation of the peace agreement; the inclusiveness of the national dialogue has not been ensured; and UNMISS and humanitarian actors remain subject to intolerable restrictions and attacks.

Given this situation, the international community, and in particular the Council, must take action along two main, complementary lines.

The first priority is to protect civilians. Once again, civilians are the victims of the worst atrocities perpetrated in South Sudan. The situation has deteriorated even further in the country in recent weeks and months. The relative calm that prevails in Juba should not distract us from the violence of the fighting in many parts of the country, including the Upper Nile area, Bahr el-Ghazal and the Equatorias. As a result, human rights violations have multiplied, in particular against women and children, who are subject to the worst atrocities. Those civilians who are able to escape the violence are forced to leave their homes and swell the ranks of the already more than 1.6 million displaced persons in the country.

The protection of civilians requires the mobilization of the international community, guided by several concerns. The first priority is the implementation of the cessation of hostilities. This will require all international actors to bring pressure to bear on the South Sudanese parties to impress upon them the fact that their weapons must fall silent.

Regional organizations, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), naturally have a leading role to play.

We must also ensure humanitarian access to the civilian population. The resurgence of attacks against humanitarian actors is intolerable. We were particularly shocked by the recent killings of three humanitarian workers in Wau and six others in March, near Pibor. Those responsible for these crimes, as with any attack of this kind, must be identified and brought to justice.

Full support also must be provided to UNMISS in its efforts to protect civilians. We welcome the more robust stance that it has adopted in recent months. Yet we cannot stand by as the Mission, which received its mandate from the Council, continues to be subject to restrictions on its movement as well as to bureaucratic impediments that prevent it from fulfilling its mandate, which is today more necessary than ever. The Council, like other regional actors and all partners in South Sudan, must unequivocally condemn such practices.

Finally, an arms embargo must be imposed, as the Panel of Experts has recommended once again. France has long been in favour of such an embargo. This is a sine qua non both for the protection of civilians and for the establishment of conditions conducive to a genuine political dialogue.

The second area of action is to achieve progress with respect to a political solution to the conflict. To reach this goal, we must first of all be realistic about

the current situation. The recent spike in clashes between Government troops, the opposition and the various armed groups makes clear that these actors continue to seek above all to consolidate their military positions as the rainy season approaches. This type of behaviour unfortunately makes it abundantly clear that South Sudanese stakeholders are continuing to choose a military approach over a political one.

Indeed, while the fighting is intensifying, the political process remains at an impasse. The peace agreement of 2015, the result of IGAD's efforts, must remain the cornerstone of the solution to the conflict in South Sudan. It is the responsibility of the Transitional Government of National Unity, which itself came out of the agreement, to ensure this. The responsibility also falls to all South Sudanese stakeholders concerned to ensure that the agreement is effectively implemented.

This applies also to the national dialogue, which can have value only if it includes the full political spectrum of the South Sudanese population and civil society, and if it is conducted in a transparent, impartial and independent manner, one that will make it possible to identify lasting solutions to the country's problems.

In this context, we welcome the efforts of the Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Mr. Festus Mogae, as well as those of the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, to ensure progress in the implementation of the peace agreement, including the national dialogue. To that end, they must be able to count on the steadfast support and continuing and coordinated mobilization of the international community and in particular of IGAD, the AU and, of course, the Council. We also reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's commitment to creating a positive dynamic and ensuring optimal coordination among all actors in this respect.

Finally, we wish to recall that, in order to shift the mindset of spoilers to the peace process in South Sudan, the Council has a relevant tool at its disposal: targeted sanctions. We should not hesitate to apply them when the situation warrants it. This applies also to perpetrators of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The efforts that need to be made by the Security Council are clear. The Council will have to take all necessary actions if its expectations, as set forth on 23 March, are ignored by South Sudanese stakeholders. Along with IGAD and the AU, we must take action so as to ensure that weapons in South Sudan fall silent and that the intolerable suffering of civilians comes to an end.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like first to welcome Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, and thank him for providing a vivid picture of the situation on the ground. Japan appreciates and supports his efforts to bring peace to the people of South Sudan in a very difficult environment. I would also like to thank Ambassador Ciss for his updates and Ambassador Seck for his very active chairmanship of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

Regrettably, we have been witnessing very concerning incidents in South Sudan. These include the ongoing violence across the country, attacks on civilians — by the Sudan People's Liberation Army, for example — continued access restrictions and famine. A staggering 3.5 million people, nearly a third of the population, have been displaced. Many of them are women and children. We are also appalled by the killing of humanitarian workers, with 14 deaths in 2017 alone. Those brave humanitarian workers sought only to help the South Sudanese people. The Government must fulfil its primary responsibility to protect civilians.

On 23 March, the Security Council was united in adopting presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4, calling for five steps to be taken, including a permanent ceasefire, humanitarian access and the removal of obstacles to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) operations. It is very disappointing that there has been no concrete action so far. Despite having personally participated in the 25 March Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) summit, President Kiir has not yet announced a unilateral ceasefire as agreed upon in its communiqué. Japan urges all parties, including the Government, to respond immediately and fully to the Presidential Statement. In that connection, we take note of the South Sudanese Government's recognition that an inclusive national dialogue is necessary to improve the country's security. Japan reiterates the importance of a genuinely inclusive national dialogue and is ready to support the efforts of the Government to that end.

Regional engagement is increasingly important in sending a clear message to South Sudan. In addition

to bilateral efforts, last month saw visits by the African Union (AU) High Representative and the AU Commission Chairperson to South Sudan, the AU Peace and Security Council communiqué, the IGAD summit meeting, and President Mogae's meeting with Riek Machar. We welcome those efforts and encourage the region to strengthen them. We also appreciate and support the neighbouring countries that are hosting nearly 1.7 million South Sudanese refugees.

Japan welcomes the follow-up report of the special investigation on the Juba violence last July (S/2017/328). We are encouraged that UNMISS has enhanced its capabilities to protect civilians, including through more robust patrols, and that it has bolstered contingency planning and staff safety, as we heard from Mr. Shearer today. There is progress, but it is still not sufficient. It must be accompanied by meaningful efforts by the Government. Japan reiterates its call for the Government's full cooperation with UNMISS on the implementation of its mandate, including on the early deployment of the regional protection force.

In conclusion, the Council remains united in backing commitments of the AU, IGAD and the Secretary-General to collectively support the peace process. We believe the Secretary-General's continued involvement is particularly important if we are to build on the 29 January joint press statement. Japan remains firm in its commitment to peace and stability in South Sudan.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, Mr. David Shearer, for his update on the situation in South Sudan. We are pleased to hear of the implementation of some measures to improve the protection of civilians and create weapons-free zones.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) can continue to count on Italy's support. I also wish to thank the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, Ambassador Seck, and Ambassador Ciss for their report on the Committee's activities.

As others have recalled, on 23 March the Security Council adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4 on South Sudan. We feel the need to repeat the five points that South Sudan is called upon to respect: immediate ceasefire; removal of obstacles to humanitarian assistance; support for the mediation efforts of the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the removal of obstacles to UNMISS and the Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism and deployment of the regional protection force; and ending attacks on humanitarian personnel and facilities.

We cannot but observe that with only a few days left until the expiration date of 30 April, set by the presidential statement, the situation has deteriorated on all five points. Despite the IGAD statement of 25 March, the ceasefire has not been announced in South Sudan. As the Secretary-General's letter (S/2017/328) indicates, the clashes are contributing to the exodus of the civilian population from the country. The final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) (S/2017/326) explains that military action is continuing along ethnic lines, the delivery of humanitarian assistance continues to be met with attacks on personnel and the national dialogue announced by the Government has been indefinitely postponed.

The result is that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan keeps being violated, fighting widens in the country and there is no national dialogue. South Sudanese women and children are the first victims of that non-compliance. The tragedy is driven by human rights violations, the use of child soldiers, sexual and gender-based violence as a war tactic, and the impunity guaranteed by the delays in establishing the Hybrid Court of South Sudan.

There can be no peace without accountability. Anyone who thinks that the differences can be solved through military means must be deluded. The only result would be a divided, indebted country filled with resentment — a situation which would weigh on the population for generations to come. We ask all parties to comply with the relevant resolutions, to cooperate with UNMISS and allow the immediate deployment of the regional protection force. We will continue to support the shuttle diplomacy of Special Representative Alpha Konaré, with the assistance of Mr. Shearer, Special Envoy Haysom, President Mogae and IGAD. We call on the regional stakeholders to act in unity and without further delay so that the parties may cease their hostilities.

In South Sudan today, there is no peace and there is no security. The impact of the conflict on the region, in terms of refugees and arms flow, for example,

is increasingly destabilizing. During last month's ministerial briefing, we observed that the time to contain that immense tragedy was ending. Today we observe, with regret, that our assertion is more pressing than ever. Therefore, in the next few weeks, the Council will have to carefully examine the options available in order to convince South Sudan that stability must be restored in the country.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the United States for having convened this meeting. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer, and Ambassador Ciss for their briefings.

At present, the situation in South Sudan remains very complex. President Kiir has made an appeal for peace through dialogue. At the same time, the political, security, development and humanitarian sectors in South Sudan continue to face numerous challenges. In particular, the severity of the ongoing famine is making it increasingly difficult for achieving sustained peace. China proposes that international community provide assistance in the following three areas.

First, we must continue to advance the political settlement in South Sudan. Achieving peace and stability is a shared aspiration of all parties in South Sudan. A political settlement is the only way out for South Sudan. What is at stake is for the international community to convince all parties in South Sudan to abandon military means, cease hostilities and immediately get back to the political-settlement track so as to implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in earnest.

China welcomes President Kiir's initiative in hosting a national dialogue. We look forward to seeing an early start of such a dialogue, which should have the extensive and active participation of all parties in South Sudan. China hails and supports the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and all other parties aimed at contributing actively to South Sudan's political process. We hope that IGAD, the AU and the United Nations can achieve enhanced coordination and emit a joint signal in favour of finding synergies for the achievement of a solution.

Secondly, we must assist the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) in better fulfilling its mandate. Secretary-General Guterres recently submitted a report on the restructuring of UNMISS (S/2017/224). It is our hope that the Secretariat can use this as a good opportunity to press ahead with the reform of the peacekeeping system to make the Mission better perform its mandate and increase its operational effectiveness so as to ensure greater safety for peacekeepers and better respond to the complex situation. China hopes that the Secretariat can improve its coordination with South Sudan's Transitional Government of National Unity and IGAD to promote the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and to properly address any issues that might arise in cooperation. We hope that the Government of South Sudan can actively implement the Security Council's resolutions and presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4, and support the better fulfilment of UNMISS mandates and the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

Thirdly, it is important for the Security Council to send out more positive and supportive messages. At present, under the current circumstances, the Security Council must encourage all parties in South Sudan to actively engage in the dialogue process and stay jointly committed to peace, stability and development. The international community must provide timely and effective assistance to help the South Sudanese people to overcome their current difficulties.

China notes that the Panel of Experts of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee recently submitted its final report (S/2017/326). China believes that any actions taken by the Security Council must be cautious ones, lead to promoting the process of a political settlement and support the mediation efforts of IGAD and the AU.

Given the severity of famine that South Sudan is facing and as a response to the United Nations appeal, the Chinese Government has decided, with the help of the World Food Programme to provide $5 million in contingency food aid to South Sudan and through bilateral channels to provide 8,750 tons of food to assist South Sudan in better responding to famine. China is ready to continue to play its constructive part in restoring peace, stability and development in South Sudan.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General David Shearer for his sobering briefing but also for the very energetic way with which he has begun his mission under difficult circumstances. I would also like to thank the representative of Senegal for his strong

leadership at the helm of the Committee established pursuant to 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

As many colleagues have mentioned this morning, it was just over a month ago that the Security Council met at the ministerial level (see S/PV.7906) to adopt a presidential statement on South Sudan (S/PRST/2017/4). We called for an end to the violence, for increased humanitarian access, for the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to be able to do its work, and for support for implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Two days later, on 25 March, the Heads of State of countries members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) issued a communiqué deciding that all humanitarian corridors should be immediately opened.

The IGAD extraordinary summit further declared that the Government of South Sudan had agreed to announce a unilateral ceasefire. In the month since then, however, the parties have failed to deliver on even one of these commitments and benchmarks. Instead, the political, security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan has continued to deteriorate, as we heard this morning. Millions are starving, and millions more are displaced either inside or outside the country. Continued fighting and reports of increased ethnically motivated violence is of deep concern. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, this is a man-made disaster.

Attacks against civilians and reports of high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in Wau, Pajok and Malakal are appalling. Yet in the face of the growing desperation and suffering of the people, we continue to see the denial of access for humanitarian actors and a failure to take the steps needed to end conflict and build peace. While the belligerents have continued their war of attrition, they must by now realize that only a political solution can resolve the conflict. Immediate adherence to the ceasefire by all parties is critically needed to allow for a meaningful political process. Such a process should be closely supported by the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD and aimed at revitalizing a comprehensive and inclusive political dialogue, always with the full and effective participation of women.

The innocent civilians trapped in the nightmare in South Sudan cannot wait. While efforts to find a political solution continue, there is a need to urgently address the humanitarian situation to avoid catastrophic consequences. Humanitarians must be able to do their job. It is unacceptable that South Sudan remain one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarian workers. We have just heard this morning of the World Food Programme as being just the latest entity to experience unacceptable obstacles to its work.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/224) indicates that the Government's procedures change regularly and that denials or delays in clearance appear to be systematic rather than incidental. Any manipulation of access to humanitarian aid for the civilian population is inexcusable and must end. We call on all parties to the conflict to uphold humanitarian principles and meet their obligations under international humanitarian law. The rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of relief across South Sudan must be ensured.

Those responsible for human rights violations and abuses must be identified and held accountable. Accountability can be an effective deterrent of atrocity crimes. We therefore encourage the President of the Security Council to take forward the Panel of Experts' proposal that we heard about this morning that the Council write to the President of the Human Rights Council and to the High Commissioner for Human Rights to request that the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan receive the full legal and forensic support needed to carry out its work.

It is essential that the Council stands united on the situation in South Sudan, and there is no reason why we should not. We must support further intensified efforts by the African Union High Representative, former President Konaré, and by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission Chairperson, former President Mogae. We should also coordinate closely with regional leaders to use their influence over the parties.

The region has indeed a critical role to play, but this does not absolve the Security Council and the United Nations of its responsibilities. We therefore welcome the leadership shown by Secretary-General Guterres and encourage him to continue to actively engage on South Sudan, as many others have said here this morning, using his good offices and bringing the United Nations system together. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Shearer and the United Nations Special Envoy for the region, Nicholas Haysom, have particularly important roles in these efforts and deserve our strongest support.

The longer this conflict is allowed to continue, with the deepening of ethnic hatred and fragmentation in South Sudanese society by the day, the harder the road for recovery, reconciliation and peace will be. We must therefore make every possible effort to find a way to urgently to break this spiral of violence.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer, for his briefing on the situation in South Sudan, as well as the Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal, Mr. Ciss, for his briefing on the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan over the recent reporting period. We welcome the personal engagement of the Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, in favour of finding a solution to the conflict in South Sudan.

We support the initiative to coordinate action in the format of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations, which should ensure peace, stability and security in the country. Our view is that IGAD indeed should play a leading role in the process. Generally speaking, we must note the consistent commitment of the Secretary-General to expanding the partnership with the African Union and subregional organizations to resolve the most difficult conflicts on the continent, seeking African solutions to African problems with relevant support from the United Nations, including in South Sudan.

We pay tribute to our colleagues of the Secretariat, who have once again presented a balanced assessment in their monthly briefing. We agree that there has been some progress in preparing for the deployment of the regional protection force. The timetable for the deployment of the advanced teams was slightly delayed, but that is not the fault of South Sudan. The fact is that Juba has maintained a constructive position on the issue of the Regional Protection Force, as evidenced by the Government's allocation of the first land parcel for deployment. We call on the Secretariat to continue to cooperate with Juba so as to resolve all existing problems with regard to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), including the need to create a mechanism for the prompt resolution of visa problems and for determining the modalities for deploying the regional protection force while complying with the basic norms of peacekeeping.

We note the efforts of the Secretary-General to fully cooperate with all troop-contributing countries as they participate in UNMISS. We have always advocated a thoughtful and mutually respectful dialogue among the parties, especially when it comes to such dangerous missions.

We share the concern of our colleagues about the disastrous humanitarian situation in the country, and we note the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to improve things. We call on South Sudan to ensure conditions conducive to the provision of international humanitarian assistance to those in need. We welcome the statement of President Kiir on granting humanitarian access to regions that are experiencing a food crisis.

We would be remiss were we not to note the assistance provided to the people of South Sudan by neighbouring countries, in particular the Sudan, which opened the border crossing in the area of Bentiu, and the hosting by Uganda of a significant number of refugees. At the same time, we stress that the famine in various parts of South Sudan, just as that in neighbouring Somalia and Kenya, is the result not only of security problems but also of bad weather, which has been recognized by representatives of international humanitarian organizations, among others.

We agree that it will be impossible to stabilize South Sudan without a full ceasefire and the launching of an inclusive political process. In that connection, we welcome President Kiir's announcement that a national dialogue will be held in the framework of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. In principle, our view is that the parameters of a national dialogue and the location of the consultations should be determined by the South Sudanese themselves. It would be unfair to blame the ongoing violence exclusively on the Transitional Government of National Unity, which, as we know, has declared unilaterally a ceasefire. It is important that the opposition take similar measures. We hold the view that, to a large degree, the security incidents are the result of command-and-control problems, as well as a lack of discipline among party ranks. We must not forget the splintering of the anti-Government forces between supporters of Taban Deng Gai and Machar, as well as clashes among members of different ethnicities and criminal gangs.

Our position on the tightening of Security Council sanctions against South Sudan has not changed. If we are to establish lasting peace in South Sudan, what we need is not a Security Council arms embargo, but rather targeted measures to disarm civilians and demobilize and reintegrate combatants. We also believe that it is essential to heed the views of the countries of the region that the discussion of the introduction of additional restrictions on Juba is counterproductive.

Against that backdrop, we draw attention to the duplicity of the approach of some of our colleagues who appear to strongly advocate introducing an arms embargo in the Security Council, but outside the Chamber bring pressure to bear on independent members of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), who are investigating the possible involvement of those Council members in supplying weapons to South Sudan.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for having organized this meeting on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). My thanks also go to Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, not only for his important statement, but also for everything he is doing in his capacity as Head of the Mission.

The crisis in South Sudan, which has gone unabated for more than three years, requires today urgent action to put an end to human rights violations and ensure the protection of civilians, of whom approximately 1.4 million are internally displaced. The situation is further compounded by the famine in several parts of South Sudan. It is therefore essential that the international community act quickly to prevent people from dying of hunger and to ensure a swift resolution of the conflict.

We call on all parties to the conflict in South Sudan to immediately resume their dialogue and implement thee Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We believe that the process of national dialogue, launched last December 2016 by President Salva Kiir, could play a key role in bringing peace to the country if it is inclusive, free and transparent.

With regard to UNMISS, the delegation of Senegal welcomes the genuine progress made in preparing for the deployment of the regional protection force with the upcoming arrival of the first wave of the regional protection force in Juba, pending the security clearances of the Transitional Government of National Unity.

We commend the progress made in the Government's allocation of the second land parcel required for the northern base of the regional protection force, with a site 10 kilometres north of Juba, whose capacities will be assessed by UNMISS. We note that UNMISS had already secured an area next to the airport to serve as a temporary base for a Rwandan battalion. Nevertheless, we call for more cooperation from the Transitional Government of National Unity on the allocation of the tasks of the regional protection force in Juba and encourage the authorities of South Sudan to take all necessary measures for the swift deployment of the regional protection force.

In the meantime, UNMISS continues to come up against numerous obstacles in its daily operations. Among these are requests for visa payments to the staff of the Mission since last January by the national immigration authorities. This violates the terms of the status of forces agreement and has a negative impact on the Mission's ability to plan, including as pertains to the regional protection force. To address this issue, we call for the cooperation of the Transitional Government of National Unity, in particular in establishing a one-stop shop that will handle visas and other authorizations for UNMISS.

With regard to the ongoing restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMISS, these restrictions continue to undermine the Mission's ability to take action swiftly in the event of attacks against civilians in a context of increasing ethnic violence and in violation of the status of forces agreement. Targeted attacks and threats to humanitarian workers are continuing, as are restrictions on humanitarian access to certain parts of the country, including in areas such as Wau, Yei and the western part of Bahr el-Ghazal.

Overall, the security situation in the country continues to deteriorate in many regions and the consequences of this considerable violence have affected a large number of civilians. We therefore call on all armed actors to immediately cease hostilities and to allow UNMISS and humanitarian workers to access civilians in need of assistance. Without such unimpeded access, the situation is likely to worsen and the local populations will to suffer from it.

This is the right moment to pay tribute to the efforts of UNMISS which, despite all the difficulties

encountered, continues to operate in a hostile environment. I should also like to pay tribute to the troop-contributing countries for their dedication to the cause of peace in South Sudan.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary General for South Sudan, Mr. David Shearer. As this is the first time he is briefing the Council, I wish to convey to him my delegation's wishes for his success and its full support as he acquits himself of task he has taken up. I also wish to thank him for his briefing, which gives us a complete overview of the latest developments in South Sudan, and of which we have carefully taken note.

Likewise, I wish to thank our colleague, Mr. Gorgui Ciss, for his briefing on the work carried out over the past five months by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, which is chaired by Ambassador Seck of Senegal.

Uruguay expresses its deep concern and alarm at the political, security, humanitarian and economic crisis taking place in South Sudan. We reiterate once again that the conflict cannot be resolved through military means. In that connection, we urge all political and military actors in South Sudan to immediately cease hostilities throughout the country. We also recall that the Government has the primary responsibility and the duty to protect its population and to ensure that those who commit crimes and abuses are held accountable.

It is vital that progress be made toward reaching a political solution to the conflict, through genuine, transparent and inclusive dialogue, the main objective of which should be the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015. As the Secretary-General has stated on various occasions, if national dialogue is to be feasible, armed activities must cease throughout South Sudan, an impartial entity must steer the dialogue, and there must be a process that includes all interested national parties.

On 23 March, the Council adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4, whereby the parties to the conflict were encouraged to adopt five measures, ranging from immediate accession to a permanent ceasefire and a peaceful resolution of the crisis, to the immediate elimination of obstacles to the operations of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian staff. In that statement, the Council expressed its intention to review progress in terms of enforcement of the measures no later than 3 April.

One month after the adoption of that statement, it grieves us to note that progress has been very limited — practically nil. The parties to the conflict continue to carry out military operations and to commit violations of human rights and international humanitarian law on a massive scale, and all of this in a climate of total impunity. We have not forgotten that, as a direct consequence of the conflict, the humanitarian situation has reached a critical level, with famine emerging in several areas of the country. Meanwhile, time continues to go by and the suffering of millions of civilians, who have nothing to do with the conflict, continues to increase. How long will we continue to wait?

This month, the Council held an interesting open debate (S/PV.7926) that linked human rights, peace and security. Today, South Sudan is an example of what should not happen in a country. After what was seen in South Sudan during the Security Council visit six months ago and the episodes of violence 2016 in Malakal, Wau and Juba, it is very difficult to remain calm and indifferent. The miserable living conditions of internally displaced persons and the vulnerability of all civilians in general should be more than enough reason to deploy the regional protection force. Such a deployment cannot be held up any longer.

In connection with the aforesaid, I wish to recognize the complex work being carried out by UNMISS and humanitarian partners to avoid the occurrence of more atrocities and to provide assistance to those most in need, in an extremely dangerous environment. In that regard, it is unacceptable that the Mission and humanitarian partners should constantly be confronted with numerous obstacles, including restrictions to access, the obstruction of patrols and humanitarian operations, and the denial and delay of admission of United Nations personnel into the country. All of that hampers the ability of the Mission to carry out the fundamental tasks of its mandate. We urge the Government of South Sudan to fully cooperate with the implementation of resolution 2327 (2016), including the deployment of the regional protection force, and to put an end to any restrictions on the Mission.

In conclusion, I wish to recognize the important ongoing efforts being undertaken by the Secretary-General and his team in the Secretariat to advance

the implementation of the recommendations of the independent special investigation with regard to the actions taken by UNMISS in response to the violence that occurred in Juba last July. Uruguay is of the view that the implementation of the recommendations will help UNMISS in particular, but also peacekeeping operations as a whole, to improve effectiveness in protecting civilians, to improve the formulation of contingency plans, and to achieve improved accountability for deployed personnel. All of that points to what we seek to do: improve the effectiveness and efficiency of peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to preface my remarks by thanking the United States presidency for having convened this very important meeting. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Mr. David Shearer, for his briefing. We reiterate our full support for all the work that he and his team are doing in the country.

Similarly, we welcome the briefing of the Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Gorgui Ciss, pertaining to the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, which is chaired by Senegal.

The current situation in South Sudan is one of the most alarming in the world. A huge part of the population suffer high levels of insecurity as a result of the ongoing armed clashes between the various actors. They are also faced with the worst humanitarian crisis since their independence. We reiterate our full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General as he seeks to find a solution that will open the door to lasting and sustainable peace in South Sudan. The cessation of hostilities and the resumption of a dialogue-led peace process is key. There must also be an end to all restrictions on humanitarian access and these must be the key priorities on which we must focus our efforts at this juncture.

In a similar vein, we pay tribute to the key role played by regional organizations in the quest for a solution to the conflict. We welcome the communiqué of the thirtieth extraordinary summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Heads of State and Government on South Sudan made on 25 March. We call on the Government of South Sudan to implement the ceasefire and the general amnesty, which would promote participation in the process of national dialogue. In the same way, we urge all stakeholders to work with the Government along those lines and to guarantee an inclusive political process in which all people of South Sudan will have an opportunity to express their needs and to contribute to the development of the country.

The ongoing support of the African Union, the Security Council and the entire international community, as well as the good offices of the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Mr. Festus Mogae, and the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, Mr. Alpha Konaré, will be crucial to ensuring that this dialogue process is genuinely inclusive and that it enjoys legitimacy.

With regard to the security situation, we are concerned about the recent clashes in Pajok and the town of Wau, which have left more than a dozen people dead. We condemn them and we hope that the Government will speedily bring those responsible to justice with full regard to due process. One of the key issues in the efforts to achieve peace in South Sudan is the transitional judicial process, because such acts cannot go unpunished. We therefore call for full compliance with chapter V of the peace agreement and trust that the African Union will take all necessary steps to ensure that a hybrid court can be established so that South Sudan can deliver impartial, credible justice.

We welcome the progress that has been made so far on the deployment of a regional protection force and call on all those involved to ensure that it is fully deployed as soon as possible, in order to achieve its key goal, which is to ensure the safety and security of civilians in South Sudan.

On the humanitarian front, and to echo an issue raised by Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien, we call on the international community and the relevant international entities to make the necessary aid available so that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) can respond to the worrying situation of famine in former Unity state. So far, according to information from OCHA, less than 30 per cent of the necessary financing is in place. We also urge the Government of South Sudan to cooperate fully with UNMISS so that it can fulfil the mandate conferred on it by the Security Council. It is also important to ensure that we can guarantee the safety and security of humanitarian workers in South Sudan so that they

can deliver aid to the hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese in need.

In conclusion, Bolivia commends the bravery of UNMISS and the humanitarian workers in South Sudan at a time when security issues are so evident. Despite that, they continue to do their work in a spirit of professionalism and dedication, and we are grateful to them.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I would like to join other speakers in thanking Special Representative Shearer and Ambassador Ciss for their comprehensive briefings.

Kazakhstan's principled position is that there can be no military solution to any conflict, including that in South Sudan. My delegation supports the joint press statement of 29 January by the African Union, the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as IGAD's communiqué of 25 March in that regard. In fact, only inclusive and transparent dialogue, along with implementation of the peace agreement, can result in genuine reconciliation and thereby lay a foundation for the rule of law to prevail. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) cannot be a substitute for a political process, and the international community should therefore give all possible support to the national dialogue in South Sudan.

Kazakhstan is concerned about the fact that UNMISS regularly encounters obstructions, bureaucratic impediments and restrictions on its operations and freedom of movement while implementing its mandate. To be effective, any peacekeeping mission needs its host Government to comply with the obligations set out in its status-of-forces agreement. We believe that UNMISS's operations will be greatly enhanced by the speedy deployment of a regional protection force, and we welcome the fact that during his meeting on 26 and 27 March in Juba with Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chair of the African Union Commission, President Kiir reaffirmed his consent to it. We commend the Governments of Ethiopia and Rwanda for successfully coordinating all aspects of the deployment of their contingents to the regional protection force. We also hope that as part of the ongoing negotiations between the Government and some of the other troop-contributing countries, the remaining procedural issues will be finalized in a timely manner. We welcome the Government of Kenya's decision to join the regional protection force by June, which will bolster the force's capabilities.

Given the gravity of the humanitarian crisis and food insecurity in South Sudan, both the Government and the non-State actors involved should ensure unhindered humanitarian access to those in need, especially in areas affected by famine. South Sudan has become the most dangerous country in the world, with an alarmingly high death rate among humanitarian workers, and we urge the Government to ensure their security and bring their killers to justice.

Children continue to be severely affected by the unprecedented violence of the ongoing conflict. Hundreds of them have been killed, maimed, raped, abducted or recruited in the conflict, which has now spread throughout the country. The United Nations estimates that nearly 16,000 children have been recruited since the conflict began in December 2013. The Security Council must therefore provide its full support to Special Representative Shearer and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in their efforts to get the Government and other stakeholders to take serious steps to close security, legal and logistical loopholes and end the inhumane treatment of children.

In conclusion, we would like to commend Special Representative Shearer and the UNMISS personnel for the work they are doing in such a difficult environment on the ground in support of the people of South Sudan. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Fodé Seck, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for his exemplary commitment to pursuing such a difficult assignment.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I want to welcome Special Representative Shearer to the Security Council today and to assure him of Ukraine's full support to his and his team. I also thank Ambassador Ciss for his briefing. We appreciate Senegal's leadership of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

My delegation is extremely concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in Wau and the other areas of South Sudan where fighting is taking place between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA in Opposition and their allied militias. It is alarming that these armed clashes continue to result in civilian casualties, significant

displacement and food shortages. Ukraine firmly condemns the fighting and calls on the parties to conduct a comprehensive investigation designed to ensure that those responsible for killings, violating international humanitarian law and undermining peace are held accountable.

We continue to believe that if we are to change the logic of the deplorable developments in South Sudan, it is crucial to put more pressure on the parties to end their hostilities and to create conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian aid. That brings me to my second point, which is about the obstacles that have been put in the way of the freedom of movement of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). We are particularly disappointed that despite the Government's numerous promises, its forces have continued their restrictions — which are in fact systematic — on UNMISS's movements and their interference with UNMISS's implementation of its mandate. The Mission's ability to implement its mandated tasks therefore remains extremely limited.

It should be recalled that the Transitional Government of National Unity is required to fulfil its commitments both under the joint communiqué of 4 September 2016, signed last year during the Security Council's visit to Juba, and under the status-of-forces agreement. UNMISS and the humanitarian actors must have unhindered access to the affected areas if they are to help those in need, especially in Wau. We cannot stress enough that freedom of movement for UNMISS and humanitarian organizations is not a privilege to be granted or taken away on a whim but rather a right, on which their ability to carry out their mandated tasks depends.

Given the deteriorating security situation in South Sudan, including where it has been the result of the rise of militias, UNMISS should be ready to respond to any scenario. In that regard, Ukraine, as one of the countries contributing troops and police to the Mission, welcomes the significant efforts that have been made to enhance its ability to protect civilians, improve its planning of its response to crisis situations and increase the safety and security of its staff. We also look forward to the start of the regional protection force's operations in South Sudan, as envisaged in resolution 2304 (2016). We call on the Government to provide all the necessary assistance, including by accelerating customs clearances and granting visas for participating units.

Lastly, I want to stress that an inclusive political dialogue is the only way to settle the conflict in South Sudan. It is important that external actors, in particular those in the region, exercise leverage to encourage the parties to sit around the negotiating table. It is also crucial to ensure that the region and the United Nations speak with one voice and send coordinated messages.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I want to thank Mr. Shearer for his briefing. I also thank Ambassador Seck for his leadership and Ambassador Ciss for his briefing today.

The BBC recently ran a report with a headline that asked the question: Why are there still famines? It is a good question. The United Nations has declared that we are facing the biggest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War due to famines in Africa and Yemen. Twenty million people are at risk of starvation in South Sudan: 5.5 million face life-threatening hunger if nothing changes soon. That is fully half the population of that young and troubled country. How can so many people be facing starvation, given the technological and humanitarian capabilities we have today?

Last month in the Council (see S/PV.7906), Ambassador Sison gave the best answer there is to famine in South Sudan. The famine is not the result of drought; it is the result of leaders more interested in political power and personal gain than in stopping violence and allowing humanitarian access. The famine in South Sudan is man-made. It is the result of ongoing conflict in that country. It is the result of an apparent campaign against the civilian population. It is the result of killing humanitarian workers — 16 this year alone. It is the result of denying starving people access to the food and medicine that will save their lives. That is the reason there is famine in South Sudan.

I commend the United Nations for continuing to shelter over 200,000 South Sudanese civilians at sites across the country. It is thanks to that effort and the dedication of aid workers that there is at least some relief for the people of South Sudan. The United Nations has also made some progress with our peacekeeping mission there. In response to failures by the mission last year, we are doing a better job protecting civilians. The mission has succeeded in establishing weapons-free zones around civilian protection sites in Juba, contributing to a significant drop in reported crime and violence, including sexual violence against women.

In contrast, the parties to the conflict in South Sudan have little to no progress to report. Last month, we issued presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4, calling on all parties to take several urgent steps. As we meet here today, none of these steps has been taken — not one. We called on the warring parties to immediately adhere to a ceasefire. There is no ceasefire in South Sudan today; instead, there are reports of serious human rights violations and abuses, and of violations of international humanitarian law, many at the hands of Government forces. Thousands of civilians continue to pour out of the country to escape the conflict. So many people have fled the violence that Uganda is now home to the world's largest refugee camp.

We called on South Sudan to allow our peacekeepers to do their job — a job that includes protecting civilians, monitoring and investigating human rights, and creating conditions for the delivery of humanitarian aid. We called on the warring parties to allow humanitarian organizations to do their job. Neither of these things has happened. The Government continues to obstruct the peacekeeping mission from reaching those most in need. Aid workers continue to be killed trying to help the victims that the fighting has created. In fact, South Sudan is the most dangerous country in the world for aid workers today. More people have died trying to help in South Sudan than in any other country. It is not even close. In addition, the Government has still not taken any meaningful action to punish the soldiers responsible for the July 2016 attack on aid workers at the Terrain Hotel in Juba. Finally, we called on the parties to the conflict to support the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to reach a political settlement. That, too, has not happened.

It is obvious that our presidential statement now joins the long list of other statements and resolutions of the Council that have been ignored by the warring factions in South Sudan. We have shown patience, and our patience has been rewarded with continued fighting and the deepening suffering of the South Sudanese people. We have shown faith that certain steps, if taken by the South Sudanese Government, would help end the fighting and lessen the humanitarian crisis, but the opposite has happened.

How long can we continue to make statements that are ignored or issue calls to action that fall on deaf ears? How many more selfless, dedicated aid workers can we watch being murdered with impunity? It is clear that the warring parties do not have the political will to end this conflict on their own, and so it falls to us to consider our next steps carefully and without any illusions.

Once more, we call on all parties to stop the violence, allow aid groups to address the humanitarian crisis, and return to the negotiating table. We urge all parties to seriously engage with the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations to achieve a ceasefire and immediate humanitarian access. We ask our regional and international partners to respond with appropriate urgency to the situation in South Sudan, and we call on the AU and United Nations envoys to put forward an operational plan of active engagement for peace in South Sudan. I call on the Council to move forward with the tools available to it, such as further sanctions and an arms embargo, or the violence and the atrocities will continue. We must not wait for more death, more displacement and more destruction before we have the courage to act.

This is unacceptable. We must see a sign that progress is possible. The first sign we must see is the South Sudanese Government abiding by President Kiir's promise to fellow Heads of State one month ago today to announce a unilateral ceasefire. We must see that ceasefire implemented, with orders for the troops of the Sudan People's Liberation Army to immediately return to their barracks. We must see a dramatic change in the treatment of humanitarian workers in South Sudan since the outbreak of the civil war in December 2013. We have all noted that 83 humanitarian workers have been killed. On 10 April, Peter Alex, a World Food Programme aid worker, was detained. The Government should heed calls for his release. Moreover, the Government must cease obstructions to humanitarian assistance.

We cannot and should not continue on the path we are on without some reassurance that South Sudan's leaders are willing to commit to the hard work of peace. It is time for South Sudan's leaders to show that they are willing to put their people ahead of personal and political self-interest, and it is time for the Council to acknowledge that its requests have been disregarded and ignored.

I have sat here and listened to the many statements that have been given and the thanks offered to Mr. Shearer. It was nice and they were genuine, but we gave him no help whatsoever to do his job because we

are allowing President Kiir to continue to do what he is doing. We are continuing to talk about how sorry we are for the people of South Sudan. We are continuing to talk about how we wish there was national dialogue, but yet there is no dialogue to be had. We talk about how we wish we could get humanitarian workers in there, but we are not doing anything to force the Government. We talk about how much more needs to be done in South Sudan, yet no one is stepping up and saying "Let us do it".

If we truly appreciate the work that Mr. Shearer is doing and if we truly care for the people of South Sudan, then we must tell the South Sudanese Government that we are not going to put up with this anymore. If we care about the leadership of the Security Council, we should not allow a presidential statement to be totally ignored. The entity that is benefiting from the division of the Council is the South Sudanese Government, so if we want it to continue to harass the people of South Sudan, and if we want to continue to see starvation in South Sudan, doing nothing is exactly what we need to keep doing. But if we are going to stop it and if we are really going to truly say we want to help the people of South Sudan, that is not about dialogue. That is not about hope. That is not about wishes. That is about action, and I call on the Security Council to act.

I now resume my functions is President of the Security Council.

There are no more speakers on the list.

The meeting rose at noon.